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General

The Maltese Islands lie in the central Mediterranean Sea and, lying 60 miles S of Sicily, are considered part of Southern Europe. The group consists of three islands and seven islets.

Malta, the main island, is the largest. Gozo and Comino are two of the next larger islands. Filfla and Kemma are uninhabited rocks.

The climate is Mediterranean with mild, rainy winters and hot, dry summers.

The terrain is mostly low, rocky, and flat. There are no permanent lakes or streams on Malta because of the porous nature of the limestone topography.

Buoyage System

The IALA Buoyage System (Region A) is in effect.

See Chart No. 1 for further IALA Buoyage System information.

Currency

The official unit of currency is the Maltese liri, consisting of 100 cents.

Firing Areas

Forts of the Maltese Islands may execute firing exercises towards the sea on towed objects. These regulations govern artillery practice from any fort in the Maltese Islands.

A blue pennant over a red flag will be shown at the station from which practice is to take place on the afternoon prior to the practice and at 0700 on the day of the practice. The same signal will be shown on the vessel towing the targets.

A red flag will be hoisted at the firing location 15 minutes before the commencement and will be kept flying during firing practice. Bombardments by vessels or planes may take place on Filfla Islet. While such practice is taking place, a red flag is displayed by day and a red light is shown at night on Torri tal Wied Zurrieq.

Exercise Zones

Five Naval Air Exercise Zones, which may be dangerous, exist in the vicinity of the Maltese Islands. They are defined, as follows:

- Zone D1.**—An area bound by lines joining the following positions:
 - 35°05'N, 14°06'E.
 - 35°05'N, 15°21'E.
 - 34°20'N, 16°24'E.
 - 34°20'N, 13°49'E.
- Zone D2.**—An area bound by lines joining the following positions:
 - 36°31'N, 17°00'E.
 - 35°30'N, 17°35'E.
 - 35°41'N, 15°25'E.
 - 36°12'N, 15°25'E.
 - 36°31'N, 15°50'E.
- Zone D3.**—An area bound by lines joining the following positions:
 - 36°01'N, 14°12'E.

- b. 35°58'N, 14°20'E.
- c. 35°55'N, 14°20'E.
- d. 35°51'N, 14°14'E.
- e. 35°56'N, 14°10'E.

4. **Zone D4.**—A circular area with an 8.5 mile radius centered on 35°40'N, 14°59'E. A lighted buoy, fitted with a radar reflector, lies at the center of the circle.

5. **Zone D6.**—An area between the parallels 36°11'N and 36°31'N and the meridians 16°00'E and 17°00'E.

Fishing Areas

Tunny Net Areas

Tunny nets are usually laid in the vicinity of Mellieha Bay and between Ponta tal Marfa and Ras il Pellegrin. The seaward extremities of the nets are marked, as follows:

- 1. By day.—A small conical buoy surmounted by a staff and ball.
- 2. By night.—A boat exhibiting two white fixed lights shown vertically.

Government

Malta is a parliamentary democracy governed by a prime minister, president, and appointed cabinet.

The capital is Valletta.

Holidays

The following holidays are observed:

Jan. 1, New Year's Day; Feb. 10, St. Paul's Shipwreck; Mar. 31, National Day; Good Friday; May 1, May Day; June 29, St. Peter and St. Paul Feast Day; Aug. 15, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Sept. 8, Our Lady of Victories Feast Day; Sept. 21, Independence Day; Dec. 8, Immaculate Conception; Dec. 13, Republic Day; and Dec. 25, Christmas Day.

Industries

Electronic and textile manufacturing and tourism are the most substantive contributors to the economy. Ship repair, construction, tobacco, and apparel are also important sectors of the economy. Oil prospecting is taking place over most of the width of Malta Channel between Malta and the S coast of Sicily. The reported positions of the associated drill rigs are promulgated in NAVAREA messages.

Languages

Maltese and English are both official languages.

Signals

The following signals are shown from the Palace Tower and from Fort St. Angelo at Grand Harbor:

- 1. The N cone signal indicates that gales or strong winds are expected between W and E, through N and is shown:
 - a. By day.—A black cone point upwards.
 - b. By night.—Three green lights, in the form of a triangle, point upwards.
- 2. The S cone signal indicates that gales or strong winds are expected from between E, through S to W and is shown:
 - a. By day.—A black cone, point downwards.
 - b. By night.—Three green lights, in the form of a triangle, point downwards.

The following signals are shown when a wind of Force 5 or greater, from between 010° and 120°, is expected in any part of Valetta Harbor, and is also shown as a scend warning after a gale warning has been cancelled until such time as the sea has fallen below 1.5m:

- 1. By day.—One black ball.
- 2. By night.—One red light.

A Gregale is the name given to strong NE winds occurring in the central Mediterranean Sea, especially in the Ionian Sea and on the coasts of Sicily and Malta. Gregale signals are, as follows:

- 1. Moderate Gregale, indicating a wind between N and E of Force 5 to 7, on the Beaufort scale:
 - a. By day.—Two black cones, points upwards, disposed vertically.
 - b. By night.—Two green lights, disposed vertically.
- 2. Strong Gregale, indicating a wind between N and E of Force 8 or greater, on the Beaufort scale:
 - 1. By day.—Three black cones, points upwards, disposed vertically.
 - 2. By night.—Three green lights disposed vertically.

Vessels are not permitted, during the night, to make use of private signals off any bay or creek of the island. The only authorized signals are:

- 1. A vessels requiring a pilot may show a blue light.
- 2. A vessel in distress may show the internationally prescribed distress signals.

See Pub. 131, Sailing Directions (Enroute) Western Mediterranean, for traffic signals shown from these stations.

Submarine Operating Areas

Submarines frequently operate within 20 miles of Malta and Gozo.

Time Zone

The Time Zone description is ALPHA (-1).

U.S. Embassy

The U.S. Embassy is situated on the 3rd Floor, Development House, Saint Anne Street, Floriana, Malta.

The mailing address is P.O. Box 535, Valletta.